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ABSTRACT

One educator's interdisciplinary interests in literature, film, and culture studies led him to the establishment of "Film Study," an upper school English course in which students develop a sense of "film literacy" through detailed "reading" of visual images; in addition, students evolve a working critical vocabulary while writing about film. Additional courses on film genres and on outstanding filmmakers were developed and added over time. The educator's commitment to continued instruction in cinema as an effective means to teach good critical thinking and writing skills as well as a way to expand and "recreate" the notion of literacy in the context of technological change led him to approach film "as film" and not merely as a supplement to literary study. This requires that cinema be seen as a separate entity requiring a new critical "language of film" and new analytical perspectives. The three courses developed and implemented by this paper's author/educator--"Film Study," "American Cinema/American Culture," and "Special Studies in Cinema: Hitchcock"--are outlined in detail. (NKA)

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By Bruce Chipman

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Watching with New Eyes:

Broadening the English Curriculum Through Cinema Studies

Dr. Bruce Chipman

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes."
--Marcel Proust

"You can observe a lot by watching."
--Yogi Berra

The influence of film and video is, for better or worse, enormous, and their importance to our students' cultural lives is indisputable. This challenge by non-print media presents an interesting issue for teachers of English, dedicated as we are to the written word over the visual image. **Our** challenge is to begin to address the need for "visual literacy" within the context of English departments.

I began to teach cinema studies as part of our Upper School English program about 22 years ago, at about the time the NCTE stressed that the study of film should be a required component of the English curriculum ("...visual literacy can be called a basic skill..."). My interdisciplinary interests in literature, film, and culture studies led to the establishment of "Film Study," an Upper School English course in which students develop a sense of "film literacy" through detailed "reading" of visual images; in addition, students evolve a working critical vocabulary while writing about film. This is a half-year course. Eight years ago, a second advanced course (again half-year) focusing on major film genres was added to our elective program; and two years ago "Special Studies in Cinema", a quarter-year course, was established to allow for a concentrated examination of one director, one period, or one genre (Hitchcock, Film Noir, the Western, for example).

I am committed to continued instruction in cinema as an effective means to teach good critical thinking and writing skills as well as a way to expand and "recreate" our notion of literacy in the context of rapid technological changes. Furthermore, most college English departments offer a major in the area of film study, and indeed many universities have separate media studies or cinema departments. It is important for us to explore this area in order to keep our course offerings timely and consistent with undergraduate education. Film, in other words, ought not to be seen as an adversary but more an academic ally, and the "pictorial" should be seen as complementary to the "textual." Indeed, the image **is** the text as we seek to decode a film--language is often ancillary.

My approach is to teach film **as film** and not merely as a supplement to literary study. This requires that cinema be seen as a separate entity requiring a new critical "language of film" and new analytical perspectives.

Film Study

Dr. Chipman

Days 1-3	introduction to the vocabulary of film
4	Visions of Light
5	**The Graduate**
7	**Bonnie and Clyde**
9	**2001: A Space Odyssey**
10	Chapters 1-6 due
11	Test #1
12	**Psycho**
14	**Raging Bull**
15	Critiques due (5)
16	PAPER #1
17	**Citizen Kane**
19	**Citizen Kane**
20	**Battleship Potemkin**
21	introduction to German Expressionism
22	**The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari**
23	**Nosferatu**
24	**Metropolis**
25	discussion of German Expressionism
26	Test #2
27	Reviews due (6)
28	PAPER #2
29	**Dead Man Walking**
30	**Drugstore Cowboy**
31	**Pi**
32	Final examination (on last films only)

Text: **Understanding Movies**, Louis Giannetti

Course grade is derived in equal parts from two tests, two papers, and the final exam. Class discussion and critiques/reviews will serve as adjustments to final grade.

Paper #1: shot analysis **or** mise-en-scene analysis

Paper #2: detailed critical examination of one film **or** Internet-based research project.

Note: On screening days, class will last about 2 hrs--bring lunch. Written critiques/reviews of each film are due the next class for use during our discussions.

American Cinema/American Culture

Dr. Bruce Chipman

How does a film create meaning? American movies serve as "texts" that document who we think we are (or were) and trace our transformation from one kind of America to another. This survey of masterpieces of the American cinema will focus on the relationship of our movies to their wider cultural/historical contexts. We shall examine how these films reveal, both directly and indirectly, something about American experience and identity. At the same time, students will be introduced to various film genres and will develop a vocabulary appropriate to film criticism through screenings, lectures, readings, and critical writing. Internet resources will be used.

1. Intro
2. Study Guide 119-26 and text 43-59--"How to Read a Movie"
3. "Hollywood Style" or "The Western"--text 115-16,206-29--Western intro
4. **Stagecoach** (1939)--1870s
5. **Shane** (1953)--1880s
6. **Unforgiven** (1992)--1890s
7. discussion
8. TEST/evaluation portfolio #1 due (first three films)
9. Gangster intro--**Little Caesar** (1930)--1920s
10. **The Public Enemy** (1931)--1920s
11. discussion
12. **Bonnie and Clyde** (1967)--1930s
13 and 14. **The Godfather** (1972)--1950s
15. discussion/paper ideas
16. PAPER
17. **Citizen Kane** (1941)--1930s
18. discussion/evaluation portfolio #2 due (five films)
19. Film Noir intro--text 184-201
20. **The Maltese Falcon** (1941)--1930s
21. **Double Indemnity** (1944)--1930s
22. discussion
23. **Out of the Past** (1947)--1940s
24. **Kiss Me Deadly** (1955)--1950s
25. **Chinatown** (1974)--1930s
26. discussion of Film Noir
27. PAPER
28. TEST/review portfolio due (five films)
29. **Easy Rider** (1969)--1960s
30. **Do the Right Thing** (1989)--1980s
31. review
32. FINAL EXAM

Notes:--On screening days, class will be 2 hours long
--Evaluations/reviews are due on the class immediately following screening
--Papers (2 of 4): detailed critical examination of one film; shot analysis; Internet-based research project; mise-en-scene analysis
--Text: **American Cinema/American Culture** (Belton, 1995)

Special Studies in Cinema: Hitchcock

Dr. Bruce Chipman

This course is an in-depth study of three of Alfred Hitchcock's greatest films from his "American Period." Careful, "active" viewing and insightful criticism are expected.

Days 1-3	Introduction to course "How to Read a Film" Introduction to Hitchcock
Day 4	**Rear Window** (1954)--essay on Filmsite.org
Day 5	discuss film--**Hitchcock Reader**, 193-205
Day 6	**Rear Window**
Day 7	**Vertigo** (1958)--essay on Filmsite.org
Day 8	discuss film--**Hitchcock Reader**, 219-30, 231-47
Day 9	**Vertigo**
Day 10	"Alfred Hitchcock: Master of Suspense" or discussion of **Vertigo**
Day 11	**Psycho** (1960)--essay on Filmsite.org
Day 12	discuss film--**Hitchcock Reader**, 305-48
Day 13	**Psycho** {Internet project due}
Day 14	"Dial H for Hitchcock" or discussion of **Psycho**
Day 15	summary/review
Day 16	final examination and paper

Requirements:

class discussion (25%)
Internet project on one film (summary and analysis) (25%)
critical essay (25%)
final exam (25%)

Note: On screening days, class will run from 9:55 until 11:55.

Internet resources:

Filmsite.org
imdb.com
hitchcock100.com
labyrinth.net.au/~muffin
geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/6494
alfred-hitchcock.com
tdfilm.com/hitchcock
interlog.com/~couke/index

American Film Noir

Tough guys, dangerous women, double-crosses, scams, paranoia, losers on the run, and the mean streets of urban jungles--this is the world of classic Film Noir, one of America's most popular film genres. This "dark cinema" is especially notable for such stylistic traits as expressionistic lighting, ornate composition, first-person narrative, and a mood of despair. Classic American Film Noir is characterized by a subversive tone of cynicism and anxiety which strips bare the myth of the American Dream and offers a bleak nightmare vision of our fragmented urban society following World War II. There will be required critical readings and writing in addition to detailed consideration of such films as **The Maltese Falcon**, **Double Indemnity**, **Kiss Me Deadly**, **D.O.A.**, and **Chinatown**.

About the Author

Bruce Chipman did his undergraduate studies at the University of Virginia and received his Ph.D. from Tufts University (where he began his teaching career). He is the author of *Hardening Rock*, a book about the music and popular culture of the American 1950s, and was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to teach at the University of Khartoum, Sudan. Dr. Chipman is Adjunct Associate Professor of English at the University of Delaware and chairs the English Department at The Tatnall School in Wilmington, Delaware. His second book, *Into America's Dream-Dump: A Postmodern Study of the Hollywood Novel*, was published in 1999.